Massachusetts Food Policy Council
November 2017

White Paper on Farm to Institution Sales
Educational Institutions in MA

Author
Noah Baustin
Massachusetts Food Policy Council Intern

Executive Summary

Increasing the procurement of Massachusetts grown and produced foods by state institutions, public and private educational programs, and meals programs is central to the Massachusetts Food Policy Council's (FPC) recommendations to advance the food systems goals for the Commonwealth that are outlined in the Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan. As a whole, educational institutions in Massachusetts represent a massive purchasing block and their food purchasing decisions impact millions of stakeholders statewide. Channeling a larger portion of this institutional buying power towards Massachusetts's farms and food producers could yield significant benefits for the economy, public health, and environment of the Commonwealth.

During the 2013-2014 school year, local foods[1] made up more than $10.2M of K-12 food procurement budgets in MA. Throughout that school year over 422,000 MA K-12 students participated in Farm to School programing. Meanwhile, the flagship University of Massachusetts campus in Amherst allocates $3M of its budget for New England purchasing and has set ambitious goals for increasing their in-state food procurement in coming years. However, increasing farm to institution sales faces significant challenges including: connecting the large distributors that are able to handle institutional contracts with small and mid-sized producers in MA, the preference of contracted food service management companies to plug in to their existing national supply chain, the mismatched seasonality of the MA farm season and the school season, a lack of accessible food processing and preparation infrastructure in the state, and the lack of a comprehensive goal-setting and food procurement tracking mechanism to guide state institutions.

With this White Paper, the Council can amplify policy recommendations that can serve to: support farm to school programming, support MA producers in meeting institutional demand, and reinforce the in-state food procurement preference for state institutions.

[1] 'Local food' as self reported by school administrators in the 2015 USDA Farm to School census. Different administrators had different criteria for 'local' and 'local' is not necessarily synonymous with 'produced in state' in this context.

Acknowledgements
Thanks to the following people for reviewing the contents of this white paper.
Reviewers do no necessarily endorse the paper's recommendations but have advised on portions of its contents.

Lisa Damon, Western Massachusetts Director, Massachusetts Farm to School
Garett DiStefano, Director of Residential Dining and Sustainability, UMass Amherst
Robert M. Leshin, Director, Office for Food and Nutrition Programs, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
John Waite, Executive Director, Franklin County Community Development Corporation

Additional thanks to:
Peter Allison, Network Director, Farm to Institution New England
Bonita Oehlke, Market Development and Food Systems Planning, MDAR
Dawn Olcott, School and Community Nutritionist, Cambridge Public Health Department
Nessa Richman, Metrics and Development Manager, Farm to Institution New England
Dena Stearns, Communications Director, Massachusetts Farm to School

About the Food Policy Council

The MA Food Policy Council (FPC) was first effective on November 7, 2010, as called for in the 2010 legislation "An Act establishing the Massachusetts food policy council." The 17-member FPC's purpose is to:

(1) Increase production, sales and consumption of Massachusetts-grown foods.
(2) Develop and promote programs that bring healthy Massachusetts-grown foods to Massachusetts residents through various programs.
(3) Protect the land and water resources needed for sustained local food production.
(4) Train, retain and recruit farmers and to provide for the continued economic viability of local food production, processing and distribution in the commonwealth.

The FPC works closely with the "Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan," which it accepted on December 10, 2015[2]. The plan is the Commonwealth's first comprehensive food action plan since 1974 and was developed after nearly two years of study in collaboration with more than 1,000 local farmers, consumers, advocates, policy makers and other stakeholders in the state's food system. The MA Food Policy Council and the MA Food System Collaborative both work towards making the key recommendations of the plan come to fruition.

The MA Food Policy Council's Goals for Institutional Purchasing

Increasing farm to institution sales in Massachusetts will help to address all four over-arching goals set out in the MA Local Food Action Plan. They are:

1. Increase production, sales, and consumption of Massachusetts-grown foods.
2. Create jobs and economic opportunity in food and farming, and improve the wages and skills of food system workers.
3. Protect the land and water needed to produce food, maximize environmental benefits from agriculture and fishing, and ensure food safety.
4. Reduce hunger and food insecurity, increase the availability of healthy food to all residents, and reduce food waste[3].

As such, farm to institution sales was included as one of the six priorities that the Food Policy Council – through Council Chair Commissioner John Lebeaux - highlighted in its November 21, 2016 letter to Governor Baker. The letter advised that the Baker administration should "Support increased purchases of Massachusetts grown and produced foods. The current focus is to support increased purchases of local foods by state institutions, public and private educational programs, and meals programs. Increased funding for state agency and institutional food procurement and standardized contract language for state and municipal purchasers, are also priorities."

[2] Access the plan at: http://mafoodsystem.org/plan/
[3] MA Local Food Action Plan 2015.

Introduction

Virtually every citizen of Massachusetts is impacted by the purchasing policies of our prominent institutions. Stakeholders include the vast population of students, teachers, and faculty in our state's public K-12 schools and universities; the patients and employees in our hospitals; the inmates and staff at our state's prisons, and the growers, food producers, food distributors, and food service workers across the state. Together, the Commonwealth's public institutions represent a massive food-procurement purchasing block. Channeling a larger portion of this institutional buying power towards Massachusetts's farms and food producers could yield significant benefits for the economy, public health, and environment of the Commonwealth.

The purpose of this white paper is to outline the current status of MA farm to institution sales – including both policies and practices – and to amplify policy recommendations that have the potential to increase in-state farm to institution sales within the Commonwealth. While there are a number of institutions that procure food, the focus of this paper is MA educational institutions.

The Benefits of Educational Institutions Purchasing Locally Grown and Produced Food

Increasing the percentage of locally grown food that is purchased by educational institutions has the potential to bring benefits to a state's economy, public health, food and agriculture industry, and environment.

Additional funding spent on local food by institutions has been shown to be a boon for the food and agricultural sector as well as the local and state economy as a whole. Increasing farm to school purchasing gives farmers, food processors, food manufacturers, local-food distributors, fishers, and ranchers significant access to new financial opportunities and markets. This increase in agricultural market diversification can provide an important source of long-term income for farmers and farm businesses. The large volume that state institutions demand can provide an incentive for farmers to invest in new processing and value-adding equipment. Further, additional funding spent on purchasing local food has been shown to have a high job-creation multiplier because money invested in local farms tends to circulate within the state.[4]

Bringing locally grown food into educational institutions can have a positive impact on students' diets and has been recommended by the CDC as a community strategy for combating obesity. Studies have shown that serving students more fruits and vegetables, especially when they are fresh, locally grown, picked at the peak of flavor, and paired with educational programming, has significant potential to improve students' receptiveness to produce. This increased consumption of fresh produce improves children's diet as a whole.[5]

The environmental benefits of increasing local purchasing by institutions include minimizing transportation-related energy use and emission production.

[4] Joshi 2008 ; Kane 2010 ; National Farm to School Network 2017 ; Roche 2016.
[5] CDC 2009 ; National Farm to School Network 2017 ; MA Food Policy Council 2017.

The Current Status of MA Institutional Food Purchasing

K-12 Purchasing in Massachusetts

As of October 1, 2015, Massachusetts had 407 operating school districts with a total of 1,854 schools. In the 2015-2016 school year, those schools housed a population of 953,429 students and 72,384 teachers[6]. The 2015 USDA Farm to School census reported that MA K-12 school food procurement for the 2013-2014 school year exceeded $48M[7*]. The large population that is impacted by K-12 procurement and the significant purchasing block that it represents makes K-12 a prime opportunity to increase institutional in-state food purchasing.

During the 2013 / 2014 school year, 422,071 MA K-12 students participated in Farm to School programs in public schools across the state. Farm to School programs can include some combination of school gardens, farm-curriculum connections, farmer visits, farm field trips, and local food procurement. Based on the USDA Farm to School Census, during that same year, local foods made up $10,262,226 of the total cost of MA school food procurement. That total brings MA local school food purchasing to 21.24%[**] of the food procurement budget, well above the national average of 11.38%. Looking at the nation as a whole, MA had the 11th highest percentage of local food procurement for K-12 public schools. Puerto Rico topped the list with 38.24% of its food procurement budget going to local food[8]. If MA K-12 schools increased the percent of local food procurement by 10%, it would inject more than $$4.8M into the Massachusetts farm economy.

Several organizations are taking innovative approaches to increase the amount of MA-grown food available in public schools. The Massachusetts Farm to School Project was launched in 2004. They "facilitate sustainable purchasing relationships between local institutions and local farms, promote local food and agriculture education for students, and support state, regional and national networking of farm to school practitioners[9]." Massachusetts Farm to School has recently been rolling out its Harvest of the Month program to K-12 schools, as well as universities, hospitals, and early education centers across the state.

[6] Mass Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
[7] USDA Food and Nutrition Service, Farm to School Program 2015.
[*] Note: the USDA survey was voluntary and the response rate in MA was 59%. This means that MA K-12 school food procurement for the 2013-2014 school year was significantly above the reported $48M.
[**] Note: The food procurement budgets of the 41% of MA schools that did not respond to the USDA survey are not represented by this figure.
[8] USDA Food and Nutrition Service 2015. MA Food Policy Council 2017.
[9] http://www.massfarmtoschool.org/about-us/

Participants in Harvest of the Month agree to locally source and feature on the menu the MA 'food of the month' at least twice each month. Massachusetts Farm to School provides individualized technical assistance to guide procurement managers in sourcing from local farms. Massachusetts Farm to School also makes promotional materials, recipes, and curriculum guides to help schools better integrate the program into their dining services and educational programing[10].

Another innovative approach to bringing MA-grown foods into an institutional setting is the Meals at the Market program. Meals at the Market brings the USDA Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) to farmers markets. The SFSP's mission is to ensure that low-income children continue to receive nutritious meals outside of the school year. It is run out of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service's Office of Community Food Systems. Farmers Markets can partner with the SFSP – with the sponsorship of an institution that produces or procures the meals in accordance with USDA guidelines - to register as a summer meals site. The benefits of bringing the SFSP to farmers markets include an increase in the days when children can access free meals (as farmers markets are often open on weekends when schools are typically closed,) an increase in traffic to the farmers market, and a valuable opportunity to cross-promote SNAP and WIC farmers market incentive programs alongside SFSP[11]. Currently only 10% of MA schools have a Farm to Summer program – leaving significant room to take advantage of federal funding to provide free meals to children across the commonwealth and increase the consumption of Mass grown foods[12].

While federal Child Nutrition Programs including the SFSP, the National School Lunch Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program are run out of the USDA, the Massachusetts Office for Food and Nutrition Programs within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) administers and oversees the programs here in the Commonwealth. DESE trains and guides their sponsors in efforts to expand their menus to include the purchasing of local foods. Further, DESE provides training on the federal and state procurement regulations that pertain to local procurement. DESE also partners with the John Stalker Institute of Food and Nutrition at Framingham State University to offer trainings and technical assistance that include non-regulatory training on topics including: culinary 'back to basics,' knife skills, and produce safety.

During the March 10, 2017 meeting of the MA Food Policy Council, Lisa Damon, Western Massachusetts Director of Massachusetts Farm to School and Simca Horwitz, Eastern Massachusetts Director of Massachusetts Farm to School presented a number of avenues of potential expansion for MA K-12 local food procurement. Ms. Damon and Ms. Horwitz noted that while produce has been an area of strong focus in the past, MA-sourced seafood, ground beef, dairy, and whole grains all represent opportunities for increasing the percentage of local food that makes it to students' plates in the Commonwealth. Also, Farm to Summer, Farm to Preschool, and afterschool programs are places for new potential growth[10]. Beyond specialized programming, increasing school meal participation more generally – including both breakfast and lunch – can have the essential impact of augmenting a school's dining service revenue. Dining services with a more robust budget base have more flexibility to explore options for

[10] Massachusetts Farm to School.
[11] USDA Food and Nutrition Service's Office of Community Food Systems – Farmers Markets and Summer Meals Programs.
[12] MA Food Policy Council Minutes.

changing their procurement and preparation practices to incorporate more MA-grown foods into the menu.

There are significant challenges for K-12 schools that wish to increase farm to school procurement. Budget constraints and price often present a significant hurdle for potential purchasers. Distribution companies often charge a premium for MA-produced foods and dining service managers work with a slim budget margin. The large distribution companies that serve many school dining services may not carry robust options for purchasing in-state products – if they carry any at all. Further, the peak of the MA agricultural production season – throughout the summer and fall months - aligns poorly with the months of high demand for schools foods – many of which come through the winter and early spring. Even if schools are able to easily procure local foods, they may not have the cooking infrastructure to prepare foods from scratch – often a necessity when purchasing from MA producers. Many MA school kitchens are set up to prepare food that has been largely processed and cooked pre-delivery. Finally, smaller afterschool and summer children's programs may, due to the necessity of reducing costs, elect to purchase in-bulk significantly ahead of the time the food will be served. The significant length of time between purchase and consumption can preclude fresh produce[11,13,14,15].

Challenges exist for producers who wish to participate in Farm to School procurement as well, significantly for retail-oriented small and mid-sized operations. Due to previously mentioned budget constraints, institutional buyers often require a low price point from their suppliers. These producers may struggle to cover their costs while selling at the low asking price. Conversely, producers may have a strong incentive to pursue other marketing options that will tolerate higher price points. Some Massachusetts producers have also reported struggling to consistently match the high-volume orders that institutional purchasers require. The price and volume challenges are impacted by larger issues including accessing land, navigating regulations, access to technical assistance, and much more. The price and volume that MA producers are able to meet contributes to the difficulty that small and mid-sized producers have establishing relationships with the large distributors who typically service institutional buyers. Large distributors often give preference to growers who can accommodate large orders consistently throughout the year[16,17,18].

Large wholesale-oriented farms that wish to sell to institutions face a different type of challenge: distribution. For this category of producer, educational institutions may offer a similar price-point and order volume size as their other market outlets. However, selling to schools can require making regular deliveries to multiple districts, with the potential for multiple stops within each district. Large producers may not have the time or resources to make these deliveries. Even if they do have the capacity, large producers may decide that pursuing other outlets that demand less complex delivery logistics is a better choice for their business.

Case Study: IQF Freezing at the Western MA Food Processing Center

[13] Kane 2010
[14] Joshi 2008
[15] Conversation re: afterschool programs with Dawn Olcott, MS – Cambridge Public Health Department
[16] Adams 2015
[17] Farm to Institution 2015
[18] MA Food Policy Council Minutes

The Western MA Food Processing Center (WMFPC) – run by the Franklin County Community Development Corporation – has been working to improve the viability of local farms selling to local schools by facilitating the freezing of crops. The WMFPC recognized the challenge of local dining halls accessing local foods during off-harvest months and began, in 2010, experimenting with blanching, freezing, and selling crops in five-pound bags under the brand Pioneer Valley Vegetable Ventures.

Pioneer Valley Vegetable Ventures saw early success when a regional executive chef at Chartwells – a company that manages dining services for K-12 schools throughout MA, NY, and CT – purchased 12,000 pounds of vegetables in 2012. While the WMFPC's relationship with Chartwells did not continue into 2013, Pioneer Valley Vegetable Ventures was able to diversify its customer base to schools, universities, and private schools across the state and process 40,000 pounds of local produce in that year.

As the WMFPC scaled up the Pioneer Valley Vegetable Ventures brand, the team soon recognized the need to improve their technical process. In 2014, the WMFPC invested in a new Individually Quick-Frozen (IQF) machine. While the new IQF machine represented a significant capital investment at approximately $110,000 total cost, it dramatically improved the center's ability to freeze large volumes of produce at a high quality standard. Today, the WMFPC is continuing to learn and adapt to develop systems that efficiently utilize their new IQF processing equipment. After processing 50,000 pounds in 2016, the WMFPC is looking forward to scaling up to their eventual goal of 200k-300k pounds per year[19].

The WMFPC's work with the Pioneer Valley Vegetable Ventures brand illustrates that increasing the amount of Massachusetts-grown produce that makes it into school dining rooms is an aspiration that can certainly be met. However, to establish a steady stream of food from MA farms to MA schools, both our producers and our procurers will need to closely examine their existing systems to determine which procedural changes and capital investments will need to be made to make lasting farm to institution relationships viable.

Higher Education Institutions Food Purchasing in Massachusetts

Enrollment in Massachusetts state universities exceeded 145,000 students in 2016[20]. The student population combined with the thousands of faculty and staff across the state make the Commonwealth's higher education institutions a massive food-purchasing block.

Most Massachusetts higher education institutions contract out the operation of their dining services to third party food service management companies (FSMC's). Sodexo, Chartwell's, and Aramark are the most prominent FSMC's among MA colleges and universities. Colleges and universities that contract with FSMC's have less control over the food that is

[19] Brooks 2017
[20] Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Data Center 2016

procured as it is the management company's staff who handle procurement. Management companies typically plug into their relationships with regional and national broadline distributors to procure food. However, the substantial size of a university contract gives the institution considerable leverage to insist upon including local procurement minimums in the contract or flexibility for the university to source a certain percentage of food independent of the FSMC's supply chain[21].

UMass Amherst and Westfield State University are the only two Massachusetts universities that run self-operated dining operations. Self-operated institutions still typically sign a contract with a 'primary vendor,' committing to purchasing the majority of their food through that vendor. Signing on with a major broadline distributor as a primary vendor significantly reduces the labor demands for the procurement team, as they are able to purchase the majority of their needed products through a single supply and logistics stream. However, many of these broadline distributors have limited options for purchasing Massachusetts produced foods. Institutions have the power to include language in their contract with their broadline distributor that specifies a purchasing allowance outside of the primary vendor relationship to source locally produced products directly from local producers or distributors specializing in providing local products[22]. Putting this negotiation power to use will be essential to successfully bringing local foods into universities dining services.

In 2015, Farm to Institution New England conducted a farm to college survey – they received responses from 14 public colleges and universities in Massachusetts. In sum, the responses showed that the 14 public institutions utilized a combined food budget of $48.1M to serve 11.972M meals throughout the previous fiscal year[23]. While all 14 reported that they purchased 'local' food for their food service, the functional definitions of local were not consistent among the different institutions. Some used a measurement of distance to define local, within 250 miles of the institution was most common, while others used a regional measurement. Only three out of the 14 institutions used 'produced within the state' as a definition of local, while six of the 14 considered 'produced within New England' to define local. Each using their own definitions of local, the institutions estimated the percentage of their food procurement that was local: the highest percentage was 35% and the low was 2.5%. The average local food procurement among the respondents was 11%. However, two institutions alone represented significant outliers that increased the average; 9 of the 13 institutions that provided a percentage reported that their local food procurement made up less than 11% of their total food procurement[24].

The products most commonly reported as the top local products procured (by value) were apples, tomatoes, and potatoes. Looking at food categories as a whole, 13 of the 14 institutions reported that they were successful in sourcing either 'many' or a 'few' of their desired products in both the fruit and vegetable categories. Conversely, when considering the meat category and the poultry category, 11 of 14 and 10 of 14 respectively reported that they either found it difficult to source any of their desired product locally or had not made 'a lot of effort' to source local products in that category[25].

[21] Farm to Institution 2017
[22] Leib 2012, Farm to Institution 2017
[23] The Massachusetts-specific data analysis was made possible by a customized set provided by FINE that specifically listed responses by MA public institutions.
[24] Farm to Institution 2017
[25] Farm to Institution 2017

While some higher education institutions have taken strong initiative to increase their in-state food procurement, significant challenges and barriers exist. Whether a college or university has a self operated dining service or contracts with a food service management company, procurement managers have a strong incentive to reduce operational and logistical costs by minimizing the number of vendors that they order from. The major vendors that can handle the large size of an institutional contract may preference out-of-state producers that can consistently fill high volume orders year round at low prices. This reality was illustrated in the FINE survey. 10+ of the 14 institutions that responded reported that the following were either major or minor barriers to purchasing local food: distributors' availability of local foods (sufficient volume,) distributors' availability of local food throughout the year, and distributors' availability of locally processed products[26].

Other challenges include the requirement by many higher education institutions for their suppliers to have certifications, such as GAP[27] certification, and to carry liability insurance. Small and mid sized MA farms often do not carry these certifications and insurance packages. Finally, while there is legislation that directs MA institutions to preference in-state producers when procuring food, there is no reporting mechanism or tracking database for in-state food procurement and many food service management companies have interpreted the law as not applying to their operation or practices[28].

Case Study: UMass Amherst and Poultry Procurement

UMass Amherst has emerged as an institutional leader in bringing local foods into dining halls. Ken Toong, Executive Director of Auxiliary Enterprises at UMass Amherst, and Garett DiStefano, Director of Residential Dining and Sustainability at UMass Amherst, gave a presentation to the MA FPC during the March 10, 2017 meeting. Mr. Toong and Mr. DiStefano run the number one ranking college food service in the country with an annual budget of $25M. Their team has responded to a rising swell of support for local purchasing from both students and parents – biannual surveys of students have shown that local food is a top priority on campus, topped only by humane practices for livestock[29].

$3M of the UMass Amherst food procurement budget is currently for food from New England and UMass Amherst has committed to increasing their local purchasing by joining the Real Food Challenge and the New England 50 by 2060 Vision[30]. UMass Amherst purchases produce primarily through the distributor Fresh Point. However, UMass Amherst is able to dictate the amount of local food it purchases and elects to directly procure up to 25% of their produce purchases. The school is

[26] Farm to Institution 2017
[27] USDA Good Agricultural Practices Certification
[28] MA Gen Law Chpt 7 Sect 23B. Leib 2012. UMass Amherst 2017.
[29] MA Food Policy Council Minutes
[30] 50 by 2060 is the goal to build the capacity to grow 50% of the food consumed in New England within the region by the year 2060. More info: http://www.foodsolutionsne.org/new-england-food-vision

consistently exploring new avenues to work with regional suppliers to meet the Real Food Challenge 20% 'real food' by 2020 standard[31] as well as 50% of food regionally sourced by 2060, in line with the Food Solutions New England 50 by 60 plan[32].

Chicken is far and away the most utilized protein by UMass Amherst Dining Services and has become a top priority for sourcing locally. In FY 2016, Dining Services purchased $2.5M in chicken. $2.425M came from national vendors, $75,000 was sourced from New England vendors, and none was purchased from MA vendors. In FY 2017, poultry purchases increased to more than $2.9M. For FY 2017, there was a marked increase in local purchasing with $154,000 coming from New England vendors and $12,000 from MA vendors. UMass Amherst has an ambitious goal to double their purchasing of sustainably and humanely raised chicken from New England producers, with the priority going to MA producers first. Over the next three years, the university aspires to increase their 2017 number of 4,000 pounds of MA produced chicken and 50,000 pounds of New England produced chicken purchased to 54,000+ pounds from MA and 100,000+ pounds from the region[33]. If the University met their goal, MA produced poultry would represent 5% of the total annual poultry consumed through UMass Amherst Dining.

For UMass Amherst to meet their local poultry purchasing goals, the Massachusetts poultry industry will need to reach a new level of scope and scale. In FY 2017, UMass Amherst purchased approximately 250,000 broilers to serve in their dining halls. However, the most recent USDA Census of Agriculture – looking at the year 2012 – documented the sales of only 80,913 broilers from 204 farms in the Commonwealth during that year. While there was a significant upwards trend in poultry production in MA between the 2007 census and the 2012 census that may have continued during the years since the census, this data illustrates the dramatic supply challenge that an institution such as UMass Amherst faces while trying to improve local food procurement rates. Even if UMass Amherst had purchased *every single* broiler documented by the USDA in Massachusetts in 2012, it would have represented only 32% of its 2017 poultry consumption[34].

Recognizing the need for significant growth in the Massachusetts poultry industry for its dining services to meet the local purchasing goal, UMass Amherst hosted a Poultry Gathering in July of 2017. The gathering brought together institutional buyers, poultry producers, distributors, and industry advocates to discuss challenges and opportunities to increasing local poultry procurement by MA educational institutions. Attendees pointed out that institutions could offer more long-term contracts to local poultry producers, providing the financial stability to make significant investments in infrastructure. Further, institutions could focus on creating culinary systems that allow them to efficiently utilize the entire bird, (as opposed to only certain cuts) support the development of a group purchasing organization that could offer group contracts to both producers and institutions, calculate their costs on a 'cost per plate' basis instead of a 'cost per pound' standard, and engage their student base to amplify the voice of buy-local advocates on-campus. Another suggestion was the creation of an additional UMass

[31] Read the UMass blog post on the Real Food Challenge here: http://umassdining.com/blog/sustainability/real-food-challenge, and find information on the Challenge itself here: http://www.realfoodchallenge.org/
[32] MA Food Policy Council Minutes
[33] DiStefano 2017
[34] USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. 2012 and DiStefano 2017.

Extension position that would have a strong focus on supporting poultry farmers with technical assistance, securing land, accessing financing, and more[35].

Attendees of the conference agreed that for MA poultry producers to reduce their prices to levels that meet institutional needs, they would need to significantly reduce the cost of processing their birds. A significant barrier to reducing this processing cost is the lack of available poultry processing plants in Massachusetts. While most institutions and food service management companies require USDA certification for poultry, there is not a single USDA certified slaughter facility in Massachusetts. Producers must choose between shipping their birds to an out-of-state facility, contracting a mobile poultry processing unit (MPPU,) or setting up their own on-farm facility. However, both MPPU's and on-farm facilities present investment, labor, and regulatory costs and challenges that dissuade many producers. Shipping to out-of-state facilities adds transportation and labor costs. The addition of a USDA-certified poultry processing facility in Massachusetts could have the potential to dramatically increase the viability of farm to institution poultry sales within the state[36].

Producers and Distributors in Farm to Institution

In 2015, MA Farm to School published the results of their survey of 70 MA farmers on the topic of sales to institutions in the 2014 season. 65% of the farmers who sold to institutions reported that they found the outlet to be profitable and 24% had taken action to expand their volume of production in the past to meet institutional demand. Actions included increasing acreage, increasing production per acre, season extension, processing, freezing, picking differently, and storing root crops. The respondents indicated an upward trend in farm to institution sales: average gross sales to institutions per farm increased to $134,895 in 2014 as compared to a reported $31,474 in 2010. However, 93% of farms that stated that they sold to institutions reported that institutional sales made up less than 30% of their total gross farm sales[37].

Farmers found significant challenges to selling to MA institutions. They included: negotiating a high enough price for their product, growing enough volume to meet institutional demand, difficulties surrounding delivery logistics and costs, the lack of capability to process and prepare foods in many school kitchens, and the mismatch of the farm and school seasons[38].

In 2015, Farm to Institution New England (FINE) completed a survey of distributors across New England. FINE found that larger distributors were more likely to see selling to institutions as an integral part of their business. FINE also found that the larger the gross sale of a distributor was, the smaller the proportion of total sales that local food represented. This survey illustrates a major challenge for institutions that hope to source more of their food from local farms: the large distributors that are most likely to have the capacity to meet an institution's high-volume needs often do not have a substantial supply of local food available. Distributors who responded to the FINE survey pointed out that local farms often lack a consistent year-round supply of food and sell at a higher price point than producers from other parts of the country[39].

[35] UMass Amherst 2017
[36] USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service 2017, UMass Amherst 2017, Anderson
[37] Adams 2015
[38] Adams 2015
[39] Farm to Institution 2015.

Significant Policy Impacting MA Farm to Institution

MA General Laws, Chapter 7, Section 23B – as amended on October 28, 2010, applies directly to institutional purchasing in the state of Massachusetts. The Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic completed an analysis of the policy in 2012. Their summary states: "Section 23B has three components: (1) a general command to state agencies and state colleges and universities to prefer local food; (2) a duty of state agencies and state colleges to make reasonable efforts to facilitate the purchase of local food, and; (3) a requirement that state agencies or authorities (but not colleges or universities) purchase local food even if it is as much as 10% more expensive than the out-of -state alternative.[40]"

While the original language proposed for the 2010 amendment would have required state colleges and universities to buy local unless it was 10% more expensive to do otherwise, the Department of Higher Education and the Council of Presidents of Massachusetts State Colleges argued to the legislature that such a requirement would run counter to the mandate of keeping student expenses low. Accordingly, the final language does not specify that universities or colleges must preference local food purchasing up to a 10% price increase. Further, the Harvard Law School team discovered during their research that food management companies largely do not see themselves as bound by the parameters set out by Section 23B as they are independent entities from the institutions for whom they provide services. There is no enforcement mechanism, monitoring scheme, or reporting requirements that compel institutions to document their efforts to abide by the local procurement preferences outlined in Section 23B[41].

Summary of Major Challenges and Gaps Facing Farm to Institution in MA

1. Many of the large distributors and vendors that can handle large institutional contracts do not source the majority of their food from MA producers. This is largely due to a preference to plug into existing regional and national supply chains and the ability of out-of-state producers to consistently fill large volume orders at a low price point year round.
2. Many MA producers lack the resources to produce at the volume and cost necessary to meet institutional demand. These include easy and inexpensive access to processing facilities, land, and capital.
3. MA producers that do have the resources to produce at an institution-scale volume and cost may not have the resources or desire to engage with the potentially complex delivery logistics required to serve some educational institutions.
4. Many institutions require producers to carry certifications and liability insurance that many MA producers may not have.
5. The MA growing season does not align well with the school season.
6. Many institutions have built their culinary systems around using non-MA produced food products. For example, many K-12 schools lack the infrastructure to do significant 'from scratch' cooking and many universities have built their menus around buying exclusively certain cuts of meat – as opposed to purchasing the whole bird.

[40] Leib 2012.
[41] Leib 2012

7. Many institutions contract their dining services to food service management companies that may have a significant incentive to procure from out-of-state producers to take advantage of their existing regional and national supply chain infrastructure.
8. There is no official reporting or tracking system making it challenging to measure the status of in-state food procurement.
9. While there is legislation that requires MA institutions to preference local producers when making procurement decisions[42], there is no enforcement and it is unclear if universities and food management service companies fall under the jurisdiction of the policy.

Action Recommendations

The MA Local Food Action Plan recommends specific actions related to increasing in-state farm to institution sales. Many of the following recommendations contain their recommendation or action reference number from the Plan.

Considering the potential costs impacting state institutions, a needs assessment is a first recommendation to provide dialogue between partners and on where local farmers may be able to fill gaps or complement the existing supply, with attention provided to patient/resident dietary needs.

Support Policies That Allow MA Food Producers to Meet Institutional Demand

Take actions that will allow MA food producers to reduce costs and prices, extend their season to year-round sales, and increase their volume of production.

Revise regulatory requirements for livestock processing to facilitate development of increased infrastructure. (**Recommendation 2.5**)

Increase opportunities for the production of value-added food products for farm to institution distribution. Examples are fresh or frozen cut fruit and vegetables, and more complex, processed foods, like fish cakes. (**Action 7.3.5)**

Commit funding for technical assistance services and resources for farm to institution producers and buyers. (**Action 7.2.1)**

Fund and offer training programs to educate institutional purchasers on local food procurement, from food purchasing to preparation. (**Action 7.3.2)**

Foster aggregators and group purchasing organizations that pool food from many local producers to achieve economies of scale that increase the viability of local farm to institution sales.

Facilitate GAP certification for more local farmers.

[42] MA General Laws, Chapter 7, Section 23B

Support Farm to School Programming and Funding.

Take actions that: increase participation in K-12 school food programs – including breakfast, lunch, and after school; increase the percentage of food offered in K-12 schools that is local, fresh, and nutritious; increase farm to school programming; and increase infrastructure that allows dining services to do more scratch cooking.

→ Support SB.242 / HB.327. 'An Act regarding breakfast in the classroom.'
"Will require that all schools where 60% or more of the students qualify for free and reduced meals serve breakfast after the bell, in the classroom. This would help ensure an additional 48,000 students have access to a nutritious breakfast during the school year, reducing nurse visits, and increasing academic performance[43]."

→ Support H.3549: 'An Act relative to healthy eating in school cafeterias.'
"Will establish pilot programs to support schools in upgrading their kitchens to do more scratch cooking, provide mini-grants for farm-to-school programming, and set parameters for a Farm to School Interagency Task Force[44]."

Expand existing, and support new, farm to school programming to increase the amount of healthy and locally produced foods purchased and served by pre- and K-12 schools, childcare, and after-school facilities. Incentivize expansion and creation of farm to school programs with public and private funds to support school districts. (**Action 4.2.2)**

Increase purchase allowance for local foods for all State colleges, universities, day- care providers, and K-12 schools. (**Action 7.1.2)**

Increase distribution of locally caught or raised seafood in institutions. (**Action 7.3.4)**

Maximize usage of USDA school food programs, including National School Food Lunch, School Breakfast, and Fruit and Vegetable Programs. Encourage school districts to adopt the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). Support the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in efforts to develop and adopt guidance that clarifies how funding will be allocated for CEP-eligible school districts. (**Action 4.3.1)**

Encourage programming that complements farm to institution initiatives in public and private universities and schools, such as schoolyard gardening, and agriculture and nutrition education. (**Action 7.3.6)**

Foster and support on-campus student activism that demands increasing local food options in dining services.

[43] Quoted from the MA Food System Collaborative website: http://www.mafoodsystem.org/projects/2017-legislation/
[44] Quoted from the MA Food System Collaborative website: http://www.mafoodsystem.org/projects/2017-legislation/

Support a Stronger In-State Food Procurement Preference for State Institutions

Take actions that create clear guidelines and goals for local procurement; require thorough tracking of local food procurement rates by state institutions; and provide robust resources for institutions, distributors, and producers to help them successfully meet local procurement goals.

Establish benchmarks for local food procurement by State institutions. Consider modeling these benchmarks on already existing benchmark goals, like the Massachusetts Executive Branch's targets for purchases from minority- and women-owned businesses. (**Action 7.1.5)**

Establish a tracking mechanism and reporting requirement for local food purchasing by public institutions. **(Action 7.1.4)**

Mandate minimum local food procurement for State universities and colleges, in addition to State agencies, and provide adequate reporting requirements and staffing for enforcement. (**Action 7.1.1)**

Develop guidelines for private institutions to create policies and standards for increasing local food procurement. (**Action 7.1.7)**

Develop and maintain an accessible, central inventory of institutions, farmers, fishermen, processors, and agencies in the farm to institution network to facilitate communication and distribution among the producers, buyers, and organizing agencies. (**Action 7.2.2)**

Track, label, and market local food distributed through farm to institution channels as 'local.' (**Action 7.2.3)**

Develop guidelines for municipalities to increase the threshold below which they may make direct purchases to enable larger purchases from farms. (**Action 7.1.6)**

References

Adams, Melissa. 2015. The Impact of Institutional Sales on Massachusetts Farms in 2014. Massachusetts Farm to School.

Anderson, Sam. On Farm Poultry Processing. Beginning Farm Network: Mass, Blog. Available at: http://bfnmass.org/blog/farm-poultry-processing

Bontrager Yoder AB, et al. 2014. Farm to Elementary School Programming Increases Access to Fruits and Vegetables and Increases Their Consumption Among Those With Low Intake. J Nutr Educ Behav. 46(5): 341–49.

Brooks, Nathanial. 2017. Food Processing Case Study: Individually Quick-Frozen (IQF) Machine Serves Up the Local Produce Institutions Want, Featured Facility: Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center. Farm to Institution New England. Available at: http://www.farmtoinstitution.org/sites/default/files/imce/uploads/Western%20Mass%20FPC%20Case%20Study.pdf

CDC. 2009. Recommended Community Strategies and Measurements to Prevent Obesity in the United States. Available at: https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/community_strategies_guide.pdf

DiStefano, Garett, Florio, Brittany, and Mortensen, Althea. 2017. UMass Poultry Gathering Presentation. UMass Amherst Dining Services. Available at: https://umass.app.box.com/s/xo7sw68hk7cz4qg0ric4vtfkt2z97wmk/file/206363065721

Farm to Institution New England. 2017. Campus Dining 101: Benchmark Study of Farm to College in New England. Available at: http://www.farmtoinstitution.org/sites/default/files/imce/uploads/FINE%20Farm%20to%20College%20Report_1.pdf

Farm to Institution New England. 2015. Getting It There: Understanding the Role of New England Food Distributors in Providing Local Food to Institutions. Available at: http://www.farmtoinstitution.org/sites/default/files/imce/uploads/FINE%20Distributor%20Report_0.pdf

Harris, D., Lott, M., Lakins, V., Bowden, B., & J. Kimmons. 2012. Farm to Institution: Creating Access to Healthy Local and Regional Foods. Advances in Nutrition: An International Review Journal, 3(3), 343-349.

Joshi, A., Azuma, A., & G. Feenstra. 2008. Do Farm-to-School Programs Make a Difference? Findings and Future Research Needs. Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition, 3(2-3), 229-246.

Kane D, Kruse S, Ratcliffe MM, Sobell SA, Tessman N. 2010. The Impact of Seven Cents. EcoTrust.

Leib, A, Abrams, J., Lee, V., Jaffee, A., Foley, C., & E. Schwartz. 2012. Increasing Local Food Procurement by Massachusetts State Colleges & Universities. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic.

Mass Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. 2016 Massachusetts State Report Card. Available at: http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/general.aspx?topNavId=1&orgcode=00000000&orgtypecode=0&

Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Data Center. 2016. State University Annual Unduplicated Headcount. Available at: http://www.mass.edu/datacenter/access/SUAnnualUndHC.asp

Massachusetts Farm to School. Harvest of the Month webpage. Accessed August 2, 2017. Available at: http://www.massfarmtoschool.org/programs/hotm/

MA Food Policy Council. 2017. Minutes: MA Food Policy Council Meeting: Friday, March 10, 2017. Available at: http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/agr/boards-commissions/fpc-meeting-minutes-3-10-17.pdf

Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan. 2015. Available at http://mafoodsystem.org/plan/

National Farm to School Network. 2017. The Benefits of Farm to School. Available at: http://www.farmtoschool.org/Resources/BenefitsFactSheet.pdf

Upstream Public Health. 2011. Health Impact Assessment HB 2800: Oregon farm to school and school garden policy. Available at: http://www.issuelab.org/resource/health_impact_assessment_hb_2800_oregon_farm_to_school_and_school_garden_policy

Roche E, et al.. 2016. Economic Contribution and Potential Impact of Local Food Purchases Made by Vermont Schools. Center for Rural Studies, University of Vermont.

UMass Amherst. 2017. UMass Poultry Gathering July 26, 2017: Meeting Summary. Available at: https://umass.app.box.com/s/xo7sw68hk7cz4qg0ric4vtfkt2z97wmk/file/206363052748

USDA Food and Nutrition Service Farm to School Program. 2015. The Farm to School Census: 2015. Available at: https://farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov/data-explorer?zc[distance]=10&zc[origin]=&state=ma&n=&f2s=All&fruit=All&veg=All&milk=All&dairy=All&meat=All&eggs=All&seafd=All&vegprot=All&grain=All&baked=All&herb=All

USDA Food and Nutrition Service's Office of Community Food Systems. Farmers Markets and Summer Meal Programs. Available at: https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/sfsp/SMT-Farmers_Markets.pdf

USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. 2017. Poultry Slaughter, 2017. Available at http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1131

USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. 2012. 2012 Census Volume 1, Chapter 2: State Level Data, Table 19 - Poultry Inventory and Sales 2012 and 2007. Available at: https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_US_State_Level/st99_2_019_019.pdf

Appendix

Full Text of MA General Laws Chapter 7 Section 23B

Section 23B: Preference for products grown in or produced from products grown in commonwealth

Section 23B. (a) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, and to the extent permitted by federal law, a state agency, authority or trustees or officers of a state college or university designated by such trustees when purchasing products of agriculture as defined in section 1A of chapter 128, including but not limited to, fruits, vegetables, eggs, dairy products, meats, crops, horticultural products or products processed into value added products as part of a Massachusetts farm operation, shall prefer products grown in the commonwealth or products produced using products grown in the commonwealth as well as fish, seafood, and other aquatic products.

(b) To effectuate the preference for those products of agriculture grown or produced using locally-grown products, the state purchasing agent responsible for procuring the products on behalf of a state agency, authority or trustees or officers of a state college or university designated by such trustees shall, in advertising for bids, contracts or otherwise procuring products of agriculture, make reasonable efforts to facilitate the purchase of such products of agriculture grown or produced using products grown in the commonwealth.

(c) The state purchasing agent responsible for procuring the products on behalf of a state agency or authority shall purchase the products of agriculture grown or produced using products grown in the commonwealth, unless the price of the goods exceeds, by more than 10 per cent, the price of products of agriculture grown or produced using products grown outside of the commonwealth.

Organizations Working on Farm to Institution Issues in Massachusetts

Farm to School Massachusetts
PO Box 1514
Easthampton, MA 01027
info@massfarmtoschool.org
(413) 253-3844
http://www.massfarmtoschool.org/

Farm to Institution New England
3 Linden Road
Hartland, VT 05048
info@farmtoinstitution.org
(802) 369-3090
http://www.farmtoinstitution.org/

Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic
1563 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138
flpc@law.harvard.edu.
http://hls.harvard.edu/dept/clinical/clinics/food-law-and-policy-clinic-of-the-center-for-health-law-and-policy-innovation/

Massachusetts Food System Collaborative
winton@mafoodsystem.org
http://www.mafoodsystem.org/

Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources
251 Causeway Street, #500
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 626-1700
http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/

Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education
Office of Food and Nutrition Programs
75 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148-4906
(781) 338-3000
http://www.doe.mass.edu/cnp/nprograms/

Project Bread
145 Border Street
East Boston, MA 02128-1903
(617) 723-5000
http://www.projectbread.org/

USDA Food and Nutrition Service
Office of Community Food Systems:
Child and Adult Care Food Program
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/child-and-adult-care-food-program
Farm to School Census
https://farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov
Farm to School Grant Program
https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school-grant-program
National School Lunch Program
https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/national-school-lunch-program-nslp
Summer Food Service Program
https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program

Franklin County Community Development Corporation
Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center
324 Wells Street, Greenfield, MA 01301
(413) 774-7204

Members of the Massachusetts Food Policy Council

State Agency Members:
John Lebeaux, Commissioner, MDAR – *Council Chair*
Jay Ash, Secretary, Designee: Helena Fruscio, MEOHED
Dr. Monica Bharel, Commissioner, Designee: Lea Susan Ojamaa, MPH
Martin Suuberg, Commissioner, MDEP, Designee: Danah Tench
Mitchell D. Chester, Commissioner, Designee: Robert Leshin, MESE
Jeff McCue, Commissioner, Designee: Frank Martinez Nocito, MDTA

Legislative Members:
Senator Anne Gobi
Representative Hannah Kane
Senator Ryan Fattman
Representative Steve Kulik – *Council Vice Chair*

Industry Members (appointed by Governor Baker):
Vivien Morris, MS, RD, MPH, LDN, Community based nutrition and public health expert
Jeff Cole, Executive Director, MA farmers markets, direct to consumer marketing
Eric Stocker, Food processor and distributor
Samuel S. Wong, PhD, REHS/RS, Local health department representative
John Lee, Allandale Farm, Farmer
Amanda Kinchla, M.S., Food Safety Extension Specialist, UMASS Amherst
John Waite, Food processor and handler

Food Policy Council Coordinator:
Bonita Oehlke, Market Development and Food Systems Planning, MDAR